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Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum**

Contents

Page

II. Replies received from Member States

Burundi 2

* A/64/150 and Corr.1.
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Burundi

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Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context

I. Preamble

1. Burundi, which has just been through a civil war lasting over 13 years, is gradually emerging from the crisis, with positive developments in the political and security situation. The significant events which have occurred as part of the peace process have helped to improve the political and security situation in the country. Particularly noteworthy are the following:

- The joint statement on the cessation of hostilities between the Government and the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU-FNL), signed on 25 May 2006;
- The Summit of Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi, held in Bujumbura on 4 December 2008;
- The registration of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) as a political party, in accordance with the Constitution of Burundi, on 9 January 2009;
- The establishment of the National Independent Electoral Commission on 13 February 2009;
- The start of the cantonment of FNL combatants on 16 March 2009;
- The achievement on 8 April 2009, by the mediators in the Burundian process, of a consensus on the part of FNL combatants to integrate those registered for demobilization and militants combatants into the defence and security forces;
- The demobilization of the President of FNL on 18 April 2009;
- The voluntary surrender of weapons which have been declared by FNL on 21 April 2009.

2. Despite the political and security progress noted, the existence of hot spots and the availability of large quantities of firearms and other ordnance in the Great Lakes region present obstacles to conflict resolution. These weapons of war are also fuelling a climate of insecurity and contributing to a resurgence of crime.

II. Overview of confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context

3. The Government of Burundi continues to be very concerned about the links between domestic security issues and regional security in general, and subregional security in particular.

4. In the domestic context:

- The Government initiated a disarmament campaign on 14 April 2006. At the institutional level, it has set up a National Commission for Civilian Disarmament and Prevention of Small Arms Proliferation which serves as the focal point of the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and bordering States (RECSA) for the implementation in the country of the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa;

- A law on small arms and light weapons is in the process of being enacted to replace the decree-law in force, which has gaps;

- A national strategy to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and to disarm civilians was adopted by the Government on 26 October 2006. The strategy establishes the broad outlines of its policy for combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These objectives are being pursued as part of the country's efforts towards peace- and security-building and conflict prevention;

- In April 2009, with assistance from RECSA, Burundi developed a national plan of action to monitor the management of small arms and light weapons for the next five years;

- RECSA has just made available to Burundi a tool for marking the entire weapons inventory of the defence and security forces. The programme to collect and destroy obsolete weapons is continuing with assistance from the Mines Advisory Group, which has set up a destruction workshop that is now operational;

- The campaign to raise public awareness regarding voluntary surrender of weapons is being carried out through the media and posters, and the new idea that weapons are more a danger than a means of protection is taking hold;

- Reform of the defence and security forces through the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former FNL combatants is under way, with satisfactory results.

III. Regional and subregional contexts

5. Burundi is involved in international cooperation with the other countries of the Great Lakes region to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

6. It has joined regional and international initiatives on the circulation of small arms and light weapons, such as:

- The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects;

- The Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa;

- The Bamako Declaration, an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, as adopted at the African Ministerial Conference held from 30 November to 1 December 2000;

- Aware of the need for political will to jointly seek peaceful solutions to border disputes, Burundi participates in the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region. Member States undertake to maintain peace and security in accordance with the Protocol on Non-Aggression and Mutual Defence in the Great Lakes Region and, in particular, refrain from the threat or use of force as a policy or instrument for settling differences or disputes or pursuing national objectives in the Great Lakes region;

- Burundi is also a member of the Tripartite Plus One Commission in the context of seeking political and military solutions to end the threat posed by the negative forces operating in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to improve, and relations among the four States members of the Tripartite Plus One Commission are currently positive, with the reopening of diplomatic missions and the revitalization of the activities of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries;

- Networks consisting of Burundian, Congolese and Rwandan parliamentarians and scholars at the universities of Burundi, the National University of Rwanda, the University of Bukavu, the Free University of Brussels, the Saint-Louis University Faculties and the Institute of Security Studies, in partnership with the Economic Community of Central African States and the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, are examining the issues of disarmament and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as peacebuilding, in the Great Lakes region.